1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

ment leading to the Sudan, including Baria (the term for slave in Amharic), Kunama, etc. Semitic languages spoken in Ethiopia (mainly in the northern half of the country), are referred to by linguists as "Ethiopic", and are derived from the Geez language which entered Ethiopia in the first half of the first millenium B.C.

Geez ceased to be a spoken language in the 14th century A.D., though it survives in the Abyssinian Coptic liturgy to this day, and was the language of religious, historical and grammatical documents almost until the present generation.

Of the daughter-languages of Geez, Tigrē, spoken in Northern Eritrea, remains the closest to the mother tongue. Its literature is recent, much of it due to the efforts of Swedish missionaries since the 19th century. The same can be said of the literature of the nearest linguistic relative, Tigrinya, spoken in southern Eritrea and in the Ethiopian province of Tigre. These linguistic and territorial names should not be confused.

Amharic, the present national language of Ethiopia, has been important since the 14th century A.D. when the earliest available Amharic document, "Songs of the Kings," was written. The first scientific grammar of Amharic was written in the 17th century by a European scholar, Ludolf. Not until the 20th century has literature in Amharic slowly developed. Amharic is partly derived from Geez, but contains a strong substratum of Cushitic (Leslau, 1945 a). Amharic predominates on the plateau of northwest-central Ethiopia.

Other spoken languages partly derived from Geez are now spoken only by small groups of the population, and are disap-

pearing more or less rapidly, mostly in favor of Amharic. They include Argobba, Adare or Harari, Gurage, Gafat.

2. The Land.

A. Geographical Location.

The Empire of Ethiopia(south of Eritrea) is located in the northeastern part of Africa, roughly between 5° and 15° north latitude, and 33° -43° east longitude. Prior to the federation of Eritrea in 1952, which added about 45,000 sq. miles and brought access to the Red Sea, Ethiopia had 350,000 sq. miles of landlocked territory. It was roughly the size of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

It is a mountainous kingdom, separated from the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden on the northeast and the Indian Ocean on the southeast by hot lowland deserts; a steep escarpment borders all along the western area down to the hot lowland of the Sudan. This mountain fortress type of landscape has enabled the plateau people to retain their independence against would-be invaders.

Today the political territory of Ethiopia is divided into 12 administrative provinces (Taqlai Gezat), each under a Governor-General appointed by the Emperor. Each province is subdivided into several(usually six) sub-provinces (Awrajja Gezat), ruled by a governor similarly appointed.

Three of the 12 provinces are Amharic-speaking; the national language has recently become the lingua franca for the larger centers of population in the other provinces also.

B. Climate, Climatic Zones, and Topography.

Climate and topography are closely inter-related in

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B. THE ETHNIC DIVISION OF LABOR.

Division of labor according to the ethnic origin of of the worker is the most distinctly organized division among the Amhara. This is based on the attitude of the Amhara that labor (especially skilled labor and manual labor) is dishonorable. This attitude is reinforced by the close kinship ties which prevent a cultural deviant from shaming the members of his family by working in the district where they are known. It also reinforces the the ethnic boundary lines, and forces the non-Amhara, non-Coptic, working ethnic groups to live within the circle of their own kinfik, religious groups, and hamlets.

[281
191] One of the most despised is the class of the Faqi, the tanners, who speak old-Cushitic languages such as Agau, are considered "pagans" in religion, and are associated by their trade with the hunters, the lowest class.

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191 On a slightly higher level are the ironsmiths, usually of Falasha, who practice Mosaic Judaism, used to speak Quarinya, an old-Cushitic language, but use the same Semitic Geez language as the Copts in their religious worship and biblical liturgy.

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[191] This use of Geez by the Falasha is puzzling to the Coptic priests, and brings about a sort of grudging respect for the Falasha, which somewhat elevates their status above that of the tanners. But they are suspected of practicing black magic in connection with their smithing of iron. Patrons take magic precautions to counteract all sorts of magic bewitchment by the Falashas whenever they have contact with them.

197 in the neighboring Sudan, for Muslim traders even today mix more Arabic loanwords into their Amharic than do Amharas. Areas conquered by slightly islamized Galla and held from the 16th to the 19th centuries were affected to varying degrees by several Galla (Cushitic) dialects.

196 Semantic drift is now in the direction of the Amharic speech pattern of Shoa province, which replaces the dominance of former aristocratic Gondar, thus introducing many more Galla traits into the language. This change is concomitant with the increasing political [191] dominance and centralization of the Shoan dynasty and power. Proclamations emanate from Addis Ababa in Shoan Amharic, and schoolchildren are increasingly taught this "standard" Amharic. Old terms of other provinces are often falling into disuse.

Sometimes this process is conscious, particularly in matters of national pride. Thus, the old word "tuqul" for the primitive, round, thatched, wattle-and-mud hut, is now replaced, through influence directed from Addis Ababa, by "sar bēt" (lit. thatched house), considered more polite, for it denotes a house not yet covered by a corrugated iron roof, without the connotation of the mud walls; or, for similar reasons, by "goja" (lit. simple residence).

The use of the call "Curarē" for laborer has been expressly forbidden, because it is now considered insulting to that hardworking ethnic group, and the call "coolie" has been purposely imported. Furthermore, increased use is made in Shoan Amharic of Geez abstracts for modern purposes, such as the suffix "nät", which can be attached [178] to any Amharic verb to render it into an abstraction. Modernization, which has recently introduced such new cultural phenomena into Addis Ababa as the adult, unmarried "Miss", has, within the past decade, amended an old term to describe the new phenomenon: the old "woyzäro" (married, noble lady; Mrs.) is amended to the new concept "woyzarit" (adult though unmarried Miss). This term is still unknown in the rural

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

144 of Semitic blood. There is rather more of the Semite in the Tigraian and the Amhara than in the Shoan and the Gojjami. The Tigraian language has come [197] much under Semitic influences, and there are many common elements in Amharic and Arabic: not only in vocabulary but also in syntax. The Amharic 20 alphabet, with over two hundred and fifty odd letters, is a very exact instrument for rendering the language. It is derived from one of the old Semitic alphabets of the Middle East. Amharic has many explosive sounds which [194] often give the impression that the speaker is excited and indignant when he is not, and with the impatient foreigner this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.

142 Physically the Amhara is slight and light-boned with regular rather 516 delicate features. He has quick almost bird-like movements and his manner gives the impression which I cannot describe better than by the word [145] fluttering. The hair and beard has the characteristic Hamitic corrugation. Men often go iron grey in middle life, but seldom white. The hair of the [302] women is artificially frizzed and dressed with butter-grease to fix it. This gives them a gollywog appearance.

157 The Amhara have the most charming manners and they like to stand on ceremony. They have a complicated social hierarchy and always dismount 576 as a salutation to superior persons. They will also touch with their lips the hands or knees of superiors. At the same time they have the naturally easy 644 and democratic outlook of the East; and the poorest man will expect attention and the right of access to a Ras, or even to the Emperor. The approaches to the palace at Addis Ababa were lined with sometimes quite humble people, farmers and soldiers, waiting an opportunity to secure the Emperor's decision on some matter.

157 To respond to his ceremonial manners is an easy way to the heart of the 576 Ethiopian. At the same time they are quick to take offence and their shrill voices are soon raised in anger.

147 The frail physique and mercurial temperament of the Amhara is doubtless the result of the rarefied alpine atmosphere and of a diet predominantly of [262] grain paste seasoned with strong condiments—which they vary from time to time with orgies on practically raw meat. But fragile as they look, the Amhara are, nevertheless, extremely hardy. They will sleep out in all weathers with nothing to cover them but their thin cotton robes; they are remarkable runners and can maintain a jog trot all day; they are like goats on the hillside.

153 I believe the Amhara to be naturally intelligent with a brain which only awaits proper training and development. During the five years of the Italian occupation, no small proportion of the population of Addis Ababa [191] acquired a fair knowledge of Italian. I knew a boy of twenty who, in addition to excellent English, was proficient in Arabic, Somali, Galla, and Swahili. He came, of course, from Harar, which is a great metropolis for peoples from all round the Red Sea. Abyssinian recruits acquired a knowledge of Morse with remarkable facility.

157 When it is possible to overcome the linguistic difficulty and get on friendly terms with Ethiopians, they prove delightful companions, naturally kind, generous and friendly, with a charming sense of humour and often a nice

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

Ethiopia. There is a special Hararene language of which an Italian society has published texts. It appears to be a corrupt mixture of Amharic and Arabic in the Amharic script. The women of Harar, in whom Somali and Galla blood predominates, are noted for their beauty. In contrast with the uniform white cotton skirts and innumerable petticoats and draperies of the frizzed Amhara ladies, the Hararenes wear a variety of bright colours and, although Moslem, they go with their faces unveiled and shoulders and bosoms exposed. Hair is worn flat in stylized curls. Their skins are often of a beautiful rose-bronze hue.

Harar is situated about 6000 feet above sea-level and its climate is one of the most equable in the world. The fertile red soil provides an abundance of the fruits of the earth and the gardens which slope down round the old walls of the city offer a variety of colour. Many pleasant hours can be spent wandering among them and talking to the cheerful friendly people. Harar is famous for its delicious coffee; and the donkeys of the district of Mount Condudo, which rises to 9000 feet some 20 miles to the east of Harar, are reputed to be the finest in Ethiopia. The jackasses of Condudo are much sought after for the procreation of mules, and the whole life of the Ethiopian Highland still depends on the mule.

The Ethiopian Highland lies in close proximity to two of the oldest routes along which have passed the commerce and the changing cultures of men: the Red Sea and the Nile. Yet the Ethiopian Highland and its peoples have remained remote. The same conditions of history apply to the Riffian Atlas overlooking the Straits into the Mediterranean and to the great Caucasian massif which flanks the ways round the Black Sea and across the Caspian.

The presence of varied racial elements in mountain areas has generally been explained as the remnants of former peoples who have been driven up into the hills as fugitives. This may be in part true. Yet I am inclined to believe that the mountains have been rather the human reservoirs from which successive floods of men have poured down, like the spring waters, into the neighbouring lowlands. There are many historical examples of this process. In Moorish history successive dynasties were recruited from the mountain Berbers and it was the Berbers who provided the man-power for the Moslem conquest of Spain. The function of the Albanians in repopulating a devastated Greece was remarked by the historian Finlay; and they have for centuries contributed numerous and warlike elements to the populations of the Near East. The same role was played by Caucasian mountaineers in both the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, in Egypt, and in Persia. Mountain peoples generally breed in excess of the capacity of the terrain to support their offspring.

I submit, then, that the Ethiopian Highlands represented just such a reservoir of primitive human material—a reservoir which must have made an important contribution, in prehistoric times, to the peopling of the Nile basin. In fact the Ethiopian Highland and the Moroccan Atlas, with the intervening massifs which rise out of the Sahara, like Jebel Adrar, Tibesti, and Darfur, may well have been the primitive homeland of the Hamitic-

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

164 There are many lepers in this country, and they do not live separated from the people, they live all together; there are many people who, out of their devotion, wash them, and tend their sores with their hands.

231 There is a great quantity of honey in all the country, and the bees are not in hives, but inside the houses, where the cultivators live, clinging to the walls on the inside, where they have a mode of egress outside, and also inside they surround the house: but they do not on this account desist from dwelling in the house, because the bees go outside. There are a great number of these swarms of bees, chiefly in the monasteries, there are also many in the woods and mountains, and the men put hives near the trees and fill them with bees, and bring them in them to the houses.

346 Since no one sits in the churches, at their doors outside of them, and within the circuit, there are always a great quantity of staves with cross pieces like a .....[1] or cripple's crutch, and each one takes his staff and leans upon it as long as he is at the offices of the church. In the churches there are many effigies painted on the walls. Effigies of [532] our Lord and our Lady, and of the apostles and patriarchs, and prophets and angels, and in all the churches St. George. They have not got solid images. There are many books in [212] the churches all written on parchment, because there is no [191] paper there, and the writing and language is Tigray,[2] which is that of the first country in which Christianity began.

In this country they are not accustomed to write to one another, neither do the officers of justice write anything. All the justice that is done, and what is ordered, is by messengers and speech. I say only that I saw the property of Prester John written down on being delivered up and received.

554 There would be much fruit and much more tillage in the country, if the great men did not ill treat the people, for

[1] *Tahu.* [2] *Tigia.*

6: Messing E-5 (1953-1954) 1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

191 212 538 ETHIOPIAN FOLKTALES ASCRIBED TO THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AMHARA WIT, ALĀQA GĀBRE-HANNA:—Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia today, is gradually becoming the *lingua franca* of the empire. Until recently it was spoken mainly on the fertile highland plateau of central and northwestern Ethiopia, in part of what was formerly known as Abyssinia. Predominantly Coptic Christian, the Amhara people have sacred writings in Ge'ez, old Ethiopic. Amharic has adapted this ancient script to its own use. The folklore of the Amhara is mainly oral (except for religious texts) and represents a crosscurrent of Middle Eastern and African cultures. Traditionally, Amhara society was one of priests, feudal [565] lords, and peasants. Lower on the social scale were non-Coptic ethnic groups who performed such important economic functions as ironsmithing and pottery-making.

538 522 193 This is reflected in the folklore. On non-religious, everyday subjects, the wit of the Amhara is peasant-like, earthy, full of tales of Rabelaisian appetites and sly solutions to human problems. The Amharic language lends itself readily to puns and hidden meanings, since many verbs can have double or triple interpretations due to the hidden variations in the basic verbal stem and the absence or presence of gemination of some consonants. The listener must pay close attention. If he misinterprets the context and fails to discern the pun, he is often made the butt of the next tricky joke by those who have heard it before. The more a storyteller and wit masters the *sowaso* 'grammar' of the Amharic language, the better he can manipulate this humor.

538 159 A master of this art was *Alāqa* 'Chief' (an honorary title) Gābre-Hanna, a contemporary of Emperor Menelik just before the end of the nineteenth century. As far as is known, he never put into writing any of his stories, witticisms, linguistic gymnastics, and philosophical puns. But to this day the peasants and even the nobles remember his stories well and tell them so often that a number of versions have developed.

He was a native of Gondar and had all the provincial pride of the "Gondarey" in the one-time greatness of this town and district that is now back country. He lived at the time the present capital, Addis Ababa, was being built and the King of Shoa had become Emperor of Abyssinia. Like many another "Gondarey," Alāqa Gābre-Hanna pretended to disdain the newfangled importations of Emperor Menelik and the growing employment of subjugated Galla tribal chiefs at the imperial court. Jokingly, he took the liberty of referring to the Emperor's home province, Shoa, as "that Galla province." (Even today much [191] Galliña is spoken there, a result of the sixteenth century conquest of the area by Galla tribes.) No one else would have dared such a remark, but he was popular with Emperor Menelik and especially with the Empress Taitu, and could tell them certain frank truths and tease them with irony in a semi-polite manner. However, he was not a court jester.

THE PROVINCES: GENERAL

	Population
Abyssinians (including Agau and Beja)	2,400,000
Gallas	2,350,000
Somalis	1,400,000
Sidamo groups	1,400,000
Afar-Saho (of Danakil districts)	150,000
Negroes	1,000,000
Asiatics and Europeans	100,000[1]
	7,600,000

From both these sets of figures the relatively accurate figures for Eritrea of 757,000,[2] and for Italian Somaliland of 1,000,000,[3] may be deducted, leaving a total for Ethiopia proper of 5,243,000 according to the *Annuario* and 5,843,000 according to the *Guida*.

The British Military Administration in Ethiopia gave the number of 7,000,000 for the total population but did not say upon what calculations this figure was based.[4]

Zoli gives the following classifications for language and race for Ethiopia alone.

Language		Race	
Amhara	1,900,000	Abyssinian	2,100,000
Tigré	400,000	Galla	2,350,000
Oromo (Galla)	2,000,000	Somali	450,000
Somali	450,000	Sidamo	200,000
Sidamo	200,000	Afar	50,000
Afar (Danakil)	50,000	Negro	850,000
Miscellaneous	1,000,000		
	6,000,000		6,000,000[5]

One point of interest in comparing these latter is that they give an estimate—a highly speculative one—of the degree to which the Gallas have become assimilated to the Amharic culture as shown by their adoption of this language. We may note that Zoli estimates that forty different languages are spoken in Ethiopia, but most of these belong

[1] *Guida*, p. 400. [2] Longrigg, *op. cit.*, Appendix C.
[3] This estimate was taken from *Whitaker*. [4] Cmd. 6589/1945.
[5] Zoli, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–13.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

priests and monks celebrated mass and prayed in every direction. But the ritualistic and ascetic aspects of Ethiopian Christianity did not monopolize the attention of Gondar, for they were balanced by the sensuous leisure that prevailed in the city. Gondar could be, as European travelers found it before the middle of the nineteenth century, "a town of pleasures" and of "boundless debauchery."[43]

A preoccupation with the symbols of the religious tradition, however, was quite consistent with a less than puritanical atmosphere. This—the work of teachers, students, painters, copyists—represented the genius of Gondar's cultural activity. Generation after generation traversed the mountainous highlands to reach this mecca of learning. Painters were drawn or formed there in such numbers that a special section of the city, the "picture market," was reserved for the sale of parchment and pigments. Under such circumstances the prestige of the literatus was bound to affect the common culture.

Gondarēs have traditionally been eager to send their children to the church schools. An unusually high percentage of people is said to have learned to read the *Dāwit* (Psalms of David, the final step in the traditional elementary curriculum) in and around Gondar than in any other part of Ethiopia. The Gondarēs have been notoriously proud of their literary and general cultural level. Indeed, they claim to speak the purest and most elegant Amharic in the land. The stability and number of Gondar's religious institutions permitted religious culture to flourish there. This gave the Gondarē occasion to become especially proficient in the religio-literary virtues as they were defined in Amhara culture.

Manz versus Gondar

As church and army were among the chief institutional developments of Abyssinia, so religious culture and military culture were among the chief products of the Amhara-Tigre spirit. Both aspects of its culture were important all over Abyssinia throughout its history, but in Gondar and Manz, respectively, they underwent a more specialized development.

Gondar grew as a center for religious culture because the materials necessary for such a growth were concentrated in one place over a long period of time. The abundance of churches, masters, and pupils created a dense climate in which religious dance, painting, poetry, and textual studies flourished. Such innovation as the traditions permitted was encouraged by the coming of clergy to Gondar from all parts of the country.

The city failed as a military and political center because only a mobile capital could control the distant regions of Ethiopia and because, as Trimingham observes, "a fixed capital enabled court intrigue to thrive more insidiously [so that] coups d'état and the killing or imprisoning of monarchs became the rule."[44] Gondar's political integrity was weakened, moreover, by the in-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Rome and the life of Abraham Lincoln than with the geography of their immediate community or the history of their own native country."[16] While a certain amount of concentration on remote matters may be essential for introducing modern adolescents to the substance and background of modern culture, it is doubtful whether they are being prepared to relate meaningfully to the society of their adulthood if that society is not made a subject for careful consideration during their schooldays.

Still another limitation on the effectiveness of the teachers stems from a quite different problem, the Ethiopian's ambivalence toward foreigners. This will be overcome with the gradual Ethiopianization of the teaching force, but that cannot be achieved for at least another generation. One area in which this problem manifests itself is linguistic nationalism. English, the official language of all post-elementary instruction, is still regarded as an outsider's tongue in Ethiopia, unlike other African countries where the European language in question serves the native peoples as a *lingua franca;* and many Ethiopians hope that the day will come when it will be replaced by Amharic as the medium of instruction.[17] Due to their ignorance of Amharic or other Ethiopian languages, foreign teachers are rarely able to gain the sort of closeness to their students that promotes the more profoundly beneficial sort of relationship. Because of this and a tradition of suspiciousness regarding foreigners, all but the radically Westernized students maintain a lingering mistrust of the teacher *qua* foreigner.

The gaps in the socialization of the modern adolescent left by the nature of his teachers and their teaching are filled to some extent by his peers. In this respect, too, modern adolescence contrasts with the traditional pattern: not only has the role of mentor and model been taken over by foreign teachers in place of the parents, but also the modern adolescent has become dependent on his peers to a degree unthinkable in traditional Amhara society.

It has been natural that the modern adolescent turn to those his own age for moral support. However much they may support the idea of his going to school as a means to a higher salary, his parents have little understanding of the new directions inherent in modern education. His foreign teachers are, at worst, preoccupied with their own narrow interests or else, at best, out of tune with the Ethiopian ethos and mentality. Older modernized Ethiopians, who should be the most sympathetic, are usually too preoccupied with their own adjustment problems to pay much attention. His schoolmates thus become his only reliable allies in the battle of growing up.

Association with age-mates is informal for the most part. There have been almost no formal youth associations or clubs in Ethiopia. The teen-age gang, with its sharp boundaries and tight controls, has scarcely come into being. Relations with peers thus takes the form of small groups of friends. More

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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The boundaries of your lips are like the sugar cane;
No matter how much one sucks them, one is never satisfied.

And in one of the few lyric passages in the first novel ever written in Amharic, the author resorts to the imagery of kissing in describing the beauty of an army camp at sunset: [539]

> The plain on which they had encamped was vaster than the mind's eye could measure. Except for that hill on which he stood, there were no elevations or declivities; no roots to trip or confound the foot; not a stone to discomfit the eye. It looked like a calm sea that every breeze had spared. The boundaries of heaven and earth were united by lips of love; lip to lip they were joined like the parts of fitted basketry. It appeared as though it would hurt them to separate, that they had entered a vow not to part.[5] [539]

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Talking for the sake of talking is another oral outlet of which the Amhara is generally fond. "In every country," remarked Arnauld d'Abbadie, "the plowman is miserly and sly; but the Ethiopian is, in addition, particularly loquacious."[6] The simple greeting of acquaintances evokes a barrage of ritualistic conversation, a phenomenon which stunned the Englishman Harris:

> Even two old crones, who are obviously tottering on the very brink of the grave, and who are afflicted with every pain and with every sorrow entailed by the fall of our first parents, never meet in the street without indulging in a string of good wishes which are reiterated so long as their breath will permit. "How are you? How do ye do? How have you passed your time? Are you well? Are you very well? Are you quite well? Are you perfectly well? Are you not well?"—are questions which serve as the prelude to a thousand other interrogatories; and at each response the Deity must be invoked as to the unadulterated happiness and perfect felicity that has been unremittingly experienced since the last meeting.[7] [596]

A number of other conventions provide further opportunities for this pleasure in talking. Anecdotes and gossip are not merely reported, but are expounded at length with the aid of colorful expressions and gestures. Riddle games are enjoyed by adults as well as young people. Men vie with one another at length in a semiformalized kind of playful boasting. In the church schools all reading is done aloud, a habit which persists among many students of secondary schools when they study outside of class. [524] [876]

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A related pleasure in making sounds for their own sake appears in the Amhara's delight in repeating the words or nonsense syllables of his folk songs. On a more refined level, there is his evident pleasure in lulling over and savoring the lines of a choice couplet. We have here for a whole culture an instance of what Brill has ascribed to the poets:

> Poetry is a sensuous or mystic outlet through words, or, as it were, through a chewing and sucking of nice words and phrases. The poet plays with the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

191 155 rhythm and rhyme of words as an epicure with a palatable viand or intoxicating old wine. . . . Like the infant, his affective state can only be pacified through a rhythmical expression of pleasurable sounds.[8]

The Amharic language itself registers a certain sensibility to the nature of poetry as an oral outlet. Agreeable and pleasing language is characterized in Amharic by the same word which is used to characterize particularly pleasing food: "*tāfata*" ("it is sweet"). The introduction to the *Chronicles* of Emperor [589] Galawdewos is but the literary embellishment of a type of statement which could be made by any Amhara:

> We commence here this beautiful narrative, of more pleasing taste to the mouth . . . than honey and sugar, which will bring pleasure to those who hear it and will give, to those who understand it, a joy like that given by song and wine.[9]

155 828 [826] The incorporation of knowledge no less than the enjoyment of words is conceived in explicitly oral terms in Amharic. The stomach is regarded as the seat of wisdom, and in the language of schoolboys the diligent student is one who has thoroughly "drunk his lesson." The experiencing of one's school as an Alma Mater is probably quite intense; as one tenth-grade student wrote in a contribution to his school newspaper, "Oh! Mother School! There is nothing like school! As a mother feeds her children with milk and bread, so does a school feed her children, the pupils, with education."[10]

155 261 574 527 [575] [794] Eating and drinking for their own sake, beyond what is required for nutrition, form perhaps the most obvious medium for oral erotism, and one that is cultivated to a notable degree among the Amhara. Feasting is called for on every possible occasion—christenings, funerals, and memorial services, as well as engagements, weddings, and annual holidays. The chief purpose of the only voluntary association in traditional Amhara society, the religious fraternal association known as the *māhebar,* is to eat and drink in honor of a certain saint on his day every month. The duration of any large celebration is said to depend on how long the food and drink last; successful ones go on for three days. Linguistic usage stresses the oral function on such occasions. One "eats at," rather than attends, a christening party; one "drinks in," rather than belongs to, a *māhebar;* one expects to "eat at," rather than dance at, somebody's wedding. The very word for Easter, "*Fāsiqā*," literally means "great feast."

155 261 264 The activity of eating is colored by a number of conventions which express its great emotional significance. The mood at mealtime is supposed to be deeply serious. Food is to be masticated aloud, indicating a total involvement with the task at hand. Not to let others hear one chewing, like eating by oneself, also is taken to imply greed. The usual obligation to stand when somebody enters the room is waived when one is eating. "Grain is king," says an

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

pleasure among the Amhara, but also as a typical response to situations which arouse anxiety. The crisis of death is met first of all by a prolonged ritual of wailing, and this is followed by a series of memorial feasts which occur on fixed days following the person's death. Any kind of bad news evokes repeated exclamations of "Ay! Ay!" When a child or wife is punished, the response is a prolonged and monotonous yell usually out of proportion to the actual pain felt. In the anxious hour before battle, war chants and boastful cries tune up the warriors' spirits. Moments of great awe, finally, such as the appearance of the holy ark when it is brought out of the church or the arrival of some great political personage, occasion a shrill ululation.

Response to illness was the anxiety area chosen as an index of positive fixation by Whiting and Child in their cross-cultural study of *Child Training and Personality*. They assumed that a fixation on oral gratification would express itself in a preference for therapies which involve swallowing something.[13] In this area, too, Amhara culture displays a preoccupation with orality, and not just in the form of swallowing. Something akin to a general principle for oral therapy appears in the well-known Amharic proverb: "For headache, shout on it! For stomach-ache, eat on it!"

A number of the oral therapies practiced by the Amhara are naturally functional, such as drinking a purgative made from leaves of the *kosso* tree to cure tapeworm, or eating a kind of unleavened corn bread to arrest dysentery. Beyond this, most of their magical therapies are also oral. Drinking holy water (and sometimes bathing in it) is believed to cure nearly every sort of affliction, from rheumatism and leprosy to eye and ear ailments. In some regions it is believed that eating the liver of a hyena will cure syphilis. Psychotherapy, too, often relies on oral remedies: the *zār* on a patient is often placated by feeding him, via the patient, a sumptuous meal. Oral types of prophylaxis are also to be noted. Garlic is eaten in order to prevent malaria. Certain kinds of animals are eaten on special occasions in order to ward off sickness. Finally, there is the remarkable phenomenon of the *lālibalā*, a night singer, who can protect himself against hereditary leprosy only by singing out loud in the night air.

In general, one can say that the Amhara have a tendency to attribute magical efficacy to oral incorporation and, to a lesser extent, to the adroit use of language. The latter belief appears in the assumption that human problems are solved by attaining some particularly fortunate verbal formulation, and in the association of outstanding wisdom with unusual mastery of language. The former appears in beliefs and legends which associate eating a lot with the attainment of unusual bravery, longevity, and physical strength. A legend about the invader Ahmad Grāñ, for example, relates that as a baby he was able to consume fourteen bowls of *ǐnjarā* at one sitting. A num-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Mary intervened, placing on the empty side for good deeds a goblet of water which Balaya Sab had once given to a sick beggar out of pity; and the Eater of Men was saved. In the pictorial representation of this legend, Balaya Sab is portrayed cutting off pieces of human flesh with a curved knife in the manner in which raw beef is attacked at the Amhara table.

Most Amhara know some sort of tale about a cannibal. The topic is familiar enough that they are able to invent new ones. One boy told me he made up the following story to explain the nature of cannibals to his younger brother:

> Once there was a cannibal. He lived among many people. He had no food in his house; he was poor. But even if he had not been poor, he just liked to eat the flesh of man. In his house was a big hole which he covered with a carpet. He would invite somebody into his house and tell him to sit down on the chair over the hole. When the person sat down and fell into the hole, he would climb down by a ladder and eat him. In this way he ate all the people in his village one by one—about a hundred people. When he had eaten all the people in his village he returned to live in the forest, because there was nobody left to eat.

The cannibal motif appears in more subtle form in the parlor game known as *gabatā*, in which the aim is to accumulate as many pebbles as possible by moving them around a board with six holes on each side. In *gabatā* the active acquisition of pebbles is called "eating" and the passive acquisition is "drinking." Similarly, those who play chess or checkers refer to the process of taking a man as "eating" him. It is notable, moreover, that the Amhara version of the old riddle about how to transport a certain number of incompatible objects across the river in one boat is posed in terms of three human beings and three cannibals.

Oral sadism is further manifest among the Amhara by the nature of their speech. The Amhara are not only loquacious but also tend, both in manner of delivery and in content of conversation, to be biting and intrusive. Backbiting, insulting, arguing, and litigating are among their more characteristic modes of self-expression.

Backbiting and insulting, and the fear of being the victim of such activities, are the focus of much attention in Amhara culture. Concern about the former is expressed in a number of Amharic proverbs:

> If the mouth lacks work, it will backbite a friend.
>
> If you praise a man once, you will be in trouble if you backbite him later.
>
> If a man is a backbiter, listen for my sake when he talks to you.

Straightforward insults erupt the polite surface of Amhara social relations only under unusually heated circumstances, though it is customary for social superiors to direct a certain amount of abusive banter at their inferiors as